

REMARKS

Claims 1-20 were rejected. The prior art cited includes Kalwaites, Difilippantonio, Howey, and Hoyle as separate 102 rejections. As to section 103 rejections, claims 5,7,8,12,14,15,17,19. and 20 were rejected under section 103 in light of Howey and Hoyle, as combined, or alternatively as Hoyle alone. Also, Hoyle and Matsunaga were combined to reject claims 6, 13 and 18.

The claims are amended as provided above. In particular, the claims are amended to clarify that the invention is directed to a needled nonwoven article. The article is moldable and is designed for molded product manufacture. Furthermore, the structure of the article is such that a plurality of zones are provided from a first edge to a second edge. See specification, page 4, lines 15-22. The density of fibers within zones varies in a gradient across the article, from the first edge to the second edge. See page 4, lines 1-25 and Figures 1-3. The density of fibers in the article is greater in zones positioned near the first edge and second edge, and less in zones positioned in the general vicinity of the midline of the article. This structure is described in detail on pages 1-4 of the specification, including specifically at page 4, lines 1-25, and in Figures 1-3. (See Figure 2, zones 110, 120, 130, etc, provided along gradient in the y direction, with density as defined and described in lines 15-22 of page 4).

The above article is not disclosed by any of the cited prior art references. Furthermore, there is no combination of references that would render obvious the invention as specified and claimed.

Kalwaites discloses a nonwoven having a grid-shaped pattern of density areas, as shown in Figure of Kalwaites 1. Yarn-like bundles 22 surround discontinuous portions 21, in a grid-like arrangement. See column 3, lines 40-50. There is no such continuous gradient as specified in the invention.

Difilippantonio does not teach the invention. There is no such moldable article with such zones arranged in the gradient in this prior art reference. The Howey and Hoyle references likewise to not disclose, nor render obvious, the invention.

Matsunaga also does not apply to the amended claims.

It is believed that the above claims as amended define over the prior art record and that the application is in complete condition for allowance. Should any issues remain after consideration of this Amendment, however, the Examiner is invited and encouraged to telephone the undersigned at his convenience.

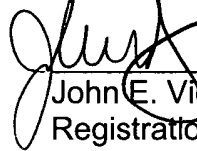
Fee Authorization: In the event that there are additional fees associated with the submission of these papers, Applicant hereby authorizes the Commissioner to withdraw those fees from our Deposit Account No. 04-0500.

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Inventor(s): David E. Wenstrup
Case No: 2801

Extension of Time: In the event that additional time is required to have the papers submitted herewith for the above referenced application to be considered timely, Applicant hereby petitions for any additional time required to make these papers timely and authorization is hereby granted to withdraw any additional fees necessary for this additional time from our Deposit Account No. 04-0500.

Respectfully submitted,



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